

had shown some hesitation, and was backward to employ him. But M. de Bourmont having given General Gerard his word of honor to serve the Emperor faithfully, and this general, whom Napoleon highly valued, having answered for Bourmont, the Emperor consented to admit him into the service. How could he have supposed that this officer, who had covered himself with glory in 1814, would, in 1815, go over to the enemy on the eve of a battle ? Napoleon immediately made such alterations in his plan of attack as this unexpected treason rendered necessary, and then marched forward. On the 15th, at one in the morning, he was in person at Jamignon, on the Eure. At three his army moved in three columns, and debouched suddenly at Beaumont, Maubeuge, and Philippe-ville. A corps of infantry, under General Zieten, attempted to dispute the passage of the Sambre. The 4th regiment of chasseurs, supported by the 9th, broke it, sword in hand, and took 300 prisoners. The marines and sappers of the Guard, sent after the enemy to repair the bridges, did not allow them time to destroy them. They followed them in skirmishing order, and penetrated with them into the great square. The brave Pajol soon arrived with his cavalry, and Charleroi was ours.¹ The inhabitants, happy at seeing the French once more, saluted them unanimously with continued shouts of ' * Long live the Emperor!' " France forever! " General Pajol immediately sent the hussars of General Clary in pursuit of the Prussians, and this brave regiment finished its day by the capture of a standard and the destruction of a battalion that ventured to resist it. During this time the 2d corps passed the Sambre at Marchiennes, and overthrew everything before it. The Prussians having at length rallied, attempted to oppose some resistance to it, but General Reille beat them with his light cavalry, took 200 prisoners, and killed or dispersed the rest. Beaten in every part, they retired to the heights of Fleurus, which had been so fatal to the enemies of France twenty years before. Napoleon reconnoitred the ground at a glance. Our troops rushed on the Prussians at full gallop. Three squares of infantry, supported by several squadrons and some artillery, sustained the shock with intrepidity. Wearied by their immovableness, the Emperor ordered General Letort to charge them at the head of the dragoons of the Guard. At the same moment General Excelmans fell upon the left flank of the enemy, and the 20th dragoons, commanded by the brave and young Briqueville, rushed on the Prussians on one side, while Letort attacked them on the other. They were broken and annihilated; but dearly was the victory purchased: Letort was killed. This affair, though of little importance in its results, cost the enemy five pieces of artillery and 3000 men killed or taken prisoners, and produced the happiest effects on the army. The illness of Marshal Mortier and the

¹ The people of Charleroi marked their respect for fallen greatness by placing the following inscription, over the gate by which Napoleon entered the town: —

ABUT : EXCESSIT : EVASIT : ERYPIT.